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ABSTRACT

Before making recommendations for specific degree titles or requirements, schools of education should come to a clearer consensus regarding their mission and the relationship to that mission of their bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs. Although institutions will likely continue to emphasize different types of teacher preparation programs and different areas of research, greater agreement among the nation's schools of education is essential if the integrity of graduate study in education is to be increased. The purpose of this article is to encourage a national discussion that will lead to a greater consistency regarding the central mission of schools of education and the meaning of different degrees offered by these school. One school of education's mission statement is examined, and its implications for graduate programs is discussed. The current status of graduate programs in U.S. schools of education are analyzed, and recommendations are made for improving these programs. (JD)

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The Graduate Degree Dilemma: A School of Education's Mission and Its Programs

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Running head: GRADUATE PROGRAMS

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Abstract

With the recent proliferation of graduate teacher preparation programs, schools of education must focus more clearly on the meaning of the different degrees they offer. If graduate degrees in education are to increase in stature, the field must come to a clearer consensus regarding the differences among bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs.

The Graduate Degree Dilemma: A School of Education's Mission and Its Programs

Clifford and Guthrie (1988) have recently recommended that schools of education replace undergraduate teacher preparation with a fifth-year program and that the Ph.D. be discontinued in favor of the Ed.D. They argue that the continued presence of the Ph.D. is clear evidence that schools of education (the term used in this article to connote colleges, schools, and departments of education) have never been comfortable with their central mission: the preparation of teachers and other professionals for the public schools. If the professional mission were accepted, Clifford and Guthrie suggest that schools of education would offer the Ed.D as their only doctoral degree. In an effort to be accepted on their respective campuses, schools of education have, in Clifford and Guthrie's view, mimicked the social sciences, rather than focusing on their unique mission of preparing professional educators.

Although their analysis is compelling, it raises more questions than it answers. For example, if schools of education abandon the undergraduate program, should they begin awarding a master's degree at the completion of the fifth-year? If so, what type of master's degree--the M.S., M.A., M.Ed., M.A.T., or a new master's degree designed specifically for the fifth-year program? If a master's degree is awarded at the conclusion of fifth-year programs, what should be the requirements for such a degree? Should a thesis or project be required? For that matter, should a dissertation be required for Ed.D. recipients if schools of education are actually to follow the pattern of other professional degrees, such as the Juris Doctorate which typically requires no dissertation? If Ed.D. programs should retain a dissertation requirement, how should the dissertations differ from those written for Ph.D. programs?

These questions lead one to conclude that before making recommendations for specific degree titles or requirements, schools of education should come to a clearer consensus regarding their mission and the relationship to that mission of their bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs. How should recipients of each degree differ in knowledge and skills, and how should such differentiation affect the overall mission of the individual school of education? Only

when faculty in a given school of education come to agreement regarding the school's mission and the competencies their graduates should possess, can they eventually agree upon how that mission should be translated into programs. Although institutions will likely continue to emphasize different types of teacher preparation programs and different areas of research, greater agreement among the nation's schools of education is essential if the integrity of graduate study in education is to be increased. The purpose of this article is to encourage a national discussion--a discussion that will lead to greater consistency regarding the central mission of schools of education and the meaning of different degrees offered by these schools. In order to launch such a discussion, one school of education's mission statement will be examined, and its implications for graduate programs will be discussed. The current status of graduate programs in U.S. schools of education will then be analyzed, and recommendations for improving these programs will be given.

The Relationship Between Mission and Programs

Schools of education have long been divided over their central mission. This division has been aggravated by historical antecedents as well as by current societal pressures. Unlike other professional schools such as medicine, law, and business, schools of education first existed as normal schools, outside the confines of a university. Normal schools had a singular mission: the preparation of educators.

As normal schools gradually took their place as schools of education in universities, their mission became less clear. No longer could teacher preparation be the sole purpose of such organizations; research was expected of all university faculty, especially those universities seeking a higher status in the educational community. But what kind of research should these new schools of education conduct? Should a school of education's research be distinguishable from that conducted in the social sciences? If so, how?

Some schools of education allowed the research mission to dominate their organization to such an extent that teacher preparation became a barely visible activity . In addition, their

research seemed to have little direct impact on the improvement of education (Clifford & Guthrie, 1988).

While the research-oriented school of education was in its ascendency, the majority of prospective teachers continued to graduate from other schools of education which remained focused on their original mission of teacher preparation. The problem, however, with some of these schools was that they ignored their research function almost as completely as their more recognized sister institutions had ignored their mission to prepare teachers.

The research orientation versus the professional preparation orientation of schools of education became even more apparent as graduate programs in education multiplied. Some programs focused strictly on building research competencies, while others focused on the preparation of professional educators. With the relatively recent introduction of graduate teacher preparation programs, confusion over the differences between the bachelor's and master's degrees in education has only increased.

In order for schools of education to focus on a defensible and coherent mission, the roles of research and professional preparation must be integrated, and degree programs must reflect that integration. Examining one school of education, its mission and programs, may be helpful to the discussion.

The College of Education at Brigham Young University (BYU) began as a teacher academy in 1875. It is now one of eleven colleges in a private university with a campus-wide enrollment of 27,000 students. Annually, BYU awards approximately 800 undergraduate and 150 graduate degrees in education. Recently, the college revised its mission statement and included four primary goals for all associated with the college. Although the statement does not provide detailed criteria for judging either graduate or undergraduate programs, it does provide a framework around which such details can be defined. The four goal areas are as follows: ". . . the College will prepare educators who (a) search for principles of truth that govern learning and teaching, (b) apply those principles to assist individual learners, (c) share those principles to

benefit others, and (d) provide leadership in solving educational problems." No one goal should be pursued at the expense of the others; all graduates must exemplify all four goals.

If everyone in the college is expected to search, apply, share, and lead, requirements must be different for each level of degree program offered. Both undergraduates and graduates are expected to achieve competencies in each of the four goal areas; however, if all students should "search, apply, share, and lead," how should the bachelor degree seeker differ from those seeking graduate degrees? The doctoral student should not only master a wider array of methods than the master's and bachelor's students, but should also produce different results with those methods.

How might the four criteria listed in the mission statement be used to differentiate among levels of degree programs in education? Although the focus in this paper is on graduate programs, the undergraduate degree will be included in the discussion in order to determine how master's and doctoral degree recipients differ from those who are awarded the bachelor's degree.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1 suggests different activities and skills at each of the three degree levels for each of the four goals designated in the mission statement. The sample activities in Table 1 are assumed to be cumulative for the various degree levels. Thus, the doctoral recipient should be able to perform all the skills of the master's and bachelor's recipient. The master's recipient should likewise be able to perform all the skills of the bachelor's recipient. For example, in the row labeled "search," the master's graduate should not only be skilled in reflection and observation, but should also be able to conduct an experimental study requiring basic knowledge of quantitative methods.

Each suggestion in Table 1 is illustrative of minimal levels of performance for various degree recipients. Some graduates will clearly exceed the minimal requirements, but their exceptional performance should not imply that all recipients of a similar degree must reach that level. For example, a bachelor's recipient may choose to become a nationally recognized

computer software developer, or a master's student may present research at national conferences every year, but they have exceeded the expected level of performance for receiving the degree.

If awarding a degree at the end of a graduate program were not necessary, there would be no need to articulate minimum requirements for success in graduate study. Students could pursue topics that interest them and not worry about mastering certain skills. But graduate programs do award degrees, largely to certify to a third party that a graduate has attained a certain level of proficiency in a given area. If a graduate degree is to have meaning, it must signify to some extent the competencies the graduate has mastered. For this reason, a school of education should come to a consensus concerning its expectations for students pursuing master's and doctoral degrees.

Whether a student is preparing to be a school counselor, teacher, or administrator, the four areas listed in Table 1 are equally informative regarding the skills and knowledge appropriate for each of the three degree levels. One might assume after reviewing the table that there is already agreement regarding these basic differences among the three degree levels. However, an examination of graduate teacher preparation programs, for example, shows that institutions often disagree regarding the type of degree to be awarded at the conclusion of the program. Some institutions offer only state certification recommendation, while others award a master's degree. Furthermore, there is even less agreement concerning the master's degree. Some institutions offer the M.A.T., some the M.Ed., while others are inventing new titles such as the M.T. or M.S.T. In addition, for the same degree title, such as M.Ed., some require a thesis, some a project, while others require neither.

M.Ed. and Ed.D. versus M.S. and Ph.D.

Over half a century ago schools of education began offering their own graduate degrees: the Ed.D. first appeared in 1922 (Spur, 1970), the M.Ed. in 1929 (Cattell, 1929), and the M.A.T. in 1936 (Belding, 1936). Those who supported the idea of the new degrees explained their position by comparing education with the other professions. Schools of law, medicine, and

business had long before named their degrees after their specific profession, i.e., the Juris Doctor, the Doctor of Medicine, and the Master of Business Administration (Berelson, 1960; Eells, 1963). Supporters of the move in education said that as a discipline, education had more in common with these other professions than it did with faculty in the arts and sciences who had adopted the doctor of philosophy as their terminal degree. Many of these supporters thought that the new graduate degrees in education would add new credibility to the profession of educator, much the same as the M.B.A. had enhanced the business profession.

The passage of time has shown that the introduction of the new education degrees has added more confusion than credibility to the field. One of the prime causes of this confusion is that most institutions retained the Ph.D. and M.A. or M.S. degrees while offering the newer Ed.D. and M.Ed. degrees. Thus, a college might offer four degrees in educational studies: the M.A., M.Ed., Ed.D., and Ph.D. Students, faculty, and administrators are then left to determine the differences among each of the degrees. The original rationale for instituting the education degrees was to de-emphasize research (the dissertation or thesis) and emphasize the professional aspects of teaching and learning. However, in order to retain respect from the other disciplines at the university, some schools of education actually increased their research requirements for the Ed.D. The differences between the Ph.D. and Ed.D. became ever more difficult to detect (Clifford, 1986).

Business, law, and medicine typically did not retain the traditional degrees when they introduced their new specialized degrees. They focused all of their energy on creating a quality graduate program that would carry with it certain meaning wherever the holder of the degree became employed. Education graduate degrees did not carry such consistent meaning.

Catalogues describing graduate programs in education were recently reviewed in order to determine the proportion of institutions offering each type of graduate degree (Moore, 1989). A total of 681 institutions were identified that offer graduate degrees in education. Of these 681, 222 offer doctoral programs. The review showed that although the M.Ed. and Ed.D. are among the most common degree programs offered at schools of education, they have not yet replaced

the more traditional Ph.D. and M.A./M.S. degrees. The review further showed that there is currently less consensus in the field regarding the naming of master's degrees than there is regarding the naming of doctoral degrees. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, although the M.Ed. is offered slightly more often than any other master's degree, less than one third of the institutions (26%) that included it in their catalogue offer it as their only master's degree.

Insert Figures 1 and 2 about here

The pattern in doctoral degrees is similar. The Ed.D. has not replaced the Ph.D. in education. However, there is less proliferation of names for doctoral degrees than for master's degrees. For example, Figure 1 shows only the six most common master's degrees offered by schools of education. In addition to these most common degree titles, institutions offer master's and specialists degrees with more than 100 different titles. The variance in doctoral degree titles is much more restricted. Although 22 schools offer doctoral degrees with titles other than Ed.D. and Ph.D., the remaining 200 institutions offer only these two degrees. Figures 3 and 4 show that 68% of the schools of education continue to offer the Ph.D. Related to this finding are the results of a recent survey of 40 universities which showed that at institutions offering both

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Insert Figures 3 and 4 about here

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doctoral degrees, an increasingly large proportion of students are opting for the Ph.D. degree over the Ed.D. (L. Brown, personal communication, August 10, 1989).

The categories in Table 1 are useful in examining the differences among the various graduate degrees in education. For example, one often hears the argument that the M.Ed. degree differs from an M.A. degree in its emphasis on research. The M.Ed. degree is supposedly designed for the master teacher or principal, neither of whom, the argument goes, engages frequently in research. But if the suggestions in Table 1 are accepted, this argument may not hold. Consider the competencies listed under the *search* section of the Table 1. If a graduate degree signifies improvement in each of the four areas, it becomes difficult to differentiate the

M.Ed. expectations for research from those of the B.A. If we expect holders of a master's degree to develop and evaluate programs that can be shared throughout the district and possibly the state, it follows that these professionals should be able to demonstrate research competence clearly above that of the bachelor's degree holder.

The same rationale may be applied to the Ed.D. degree versus the Ph.D. Proponents of the Ed.D. often say that the degree is more appropriate for educators who hold administrative positions, or master teachers whose responsibilities are primarily focused on activities other than research. Again, this argument may not hold if we compare the competencies for different degree levels. Those holding an Ed.D. degree (district office administrators--including the superintendent, state level educational leaders, and university professors) should clearly have research skills, since they will likely supervise others doing research or be directly involved in conducting it themselves. Effective superintendents are constantly gathering data, examining data, and using data to make decisions and to convince others of a certain position. Other district and state administrators are also required to gather and use data as they improve the programs over which they have supervisory responsibility. Additionally, since some recipients of the Ed.D. take positions as professors and administrators in higher education, the need for research skills beyond those of the master's degree holder is apparent.

Thesis or Project

The primary rationale for offering the M.Ed. degree rather than the M.S. degree is that the M.Ed. focuses on the enhancement of professional teaching; therefore, an applied project is required as a culminating experience. Many often argue that the M.S. forces a student to spend too much time on research because it requires a thesis and oral defense, but education is not the only profession with this apparent dilemma. A recent article reported that a medical school had recently approved a new graduate program entitled the Master's of Public Health (Deseret News, 1989). The article described how the institution currently had an M.S. in the same field, but that degree required a thesis, while the new program did not. Each program would enroll a similar

number of students each year, but students in the M.P.H. program would not be required to develop research skills, write a thesis, or defend it. The rationale for the new program rested on the premise that there was a demand in the community for a non-thesis graduate program for public health administrators.

Education has been driven by much the same market forces. Teachers interested in pursuing a master's degree seldom have the financial capability to leave their career while they pursue a graduate degree. Thus, most graduate degrees in education are conducted during the evenings and in the summers when educators are free to attend classes. Schools of education have often responded to these market forces in much the same way as the medical school just described responded to requests for a non-thesis master's degree in public health. Now that career ladder programs are becoming more common in public education, school districts are also requesting that schools of education offer short-term graduate programs for those who desire to become master teachers in their district.

The market, however, should not be the primary driving force behind the development or the delivery of graduate programs. Rather, graduate study should be planned and conducted with the aim of improving education, not simply that of perpetuating the status quo. If this premise is accepted, one must also accept the notion that research skills (the "search" goal in the mission statement) must be clearly enhanced at each degree level. Those who support the master's project option, rather than a thesis, might say that the project also offers a mechanism for enhancing research skill, albeit minimally. What, then, is the difference between a master's project and a thesis?

When faculty are pressed to define the difference between the two types of culminating experiences, they often say that the project is more applied, while the thesis might be a controlled study. The project might consist of developing a new teaching approach and trying it out in the teacher's own classroom, hence making the project more useful as a learning experience for a master teacher. Proponents of the project do not feel that master teachers or principals will

engage in formal research in their professional roles in the schools; why, then, should we require them to complete formal research as a requirement for their master's degree?

That many teachers and principals holding graduate degrees do not engage in research is not justification for saying that they should neglect their research skills during graduate study. Research, after all, in its broadest form is asking questions and *attempting* to find answers. Of all professionals, educators should be among the most inquisitive, exemplifying to their students their own love for learning. This searching and questioning process should be enhanced with new skills as a student achieves higher degree levels. In addition to the search skills of observing and reflecting that a student learned while seeking the bachelor's degree, the master's student should also acquire basic empirical methods and statistical procedures. At a master's level, graduates should also be able to engage in creative endeavors in such a way that others might benefit; to do this requires writing skills, regardless of the type of creative work an educator chooses to pursue. Since a master's project is often not bound and "published," faculty and students often pay less attention to the quality of the final project. When completing a thesis, the student and faculty all know that others will be reading it--even if only other faculty and administrators on campus. The very fact that a thesis is written for others, potentially resulting in an article that can be reviewed and disseminated, makes it a more valid training tool for educators who should be prepared to have influence beyond the students in their own classroom.

Implications

1) Efforts to strengthen graduate programs in education should focus on a clearer definition of how doctoral, master's and bachelor's programs differ from one another, rather than on the relatively empty argument over the Ph.D. versus the Ed.D. If *all* doctoral programs in education clearly went beyond the master's level of preparation, and if all master's programs clearly went beyond the bachelor's level of preparation, the name of the particular degree would gradually fade in significance. Some specialty areas would select the Ph.D. and M.S.,

while others would opt for the Ed.D. and M.Ed., but all recipients of such degrees would perform master's or doctoral level work.

2) Although the title given to a specific graduate program is much less important than the quality of the program, the image of graduate study in education would be enhanced if the number of degree titles were greatly reduced and the specialist degree were eliminated. One could safely assume that there is currently enough disagreement among educators regarding the differences between the master's and doctoral level, without adding an interim degree level. Schools of education currently offer graduate degrees with more than 100 different titles, with most of the variance occurring at the master's and specialist levels. This variance causes confusion among employers, as well as among students. If the image of graduate study in education is to be improved, those in the field must come to a greater consensus regarding the meaning and naming of specific programs.

3) Only one type of doctoral or master's degree should be offered in a given specialty area in a school of education. For example, an institution should not offer both a Ph.D. and Ed.D. in special education, or both an M.S. and M.Ed. in educational leadership. Differentiating between such degrees in a single specialty area is difficult, if not fruitless. When both types of degrees are offered in a single area, the Ed.D. and M.Ed. often become lesser imitations of the more established degrees. But when they are the only degrees offered in an area, the M.Ed. and Ed.D. can signify strong master's and doctoral programs.

4) A thesis or dissertation should be required in all education graduate programs. If educators are to become leaders in their districts, states, and nation, they must demonstrate mastery of oral and written communication. This does not mean that theses or dissertations must focus only on theory development. Carefully evaluated intervention programs which have clear implications for the district or state should be acceptable theses. Case studies, ethnographies, and empirical evaluations which can result in national publications should be as acceptable for dissertations as are more traditional studies whose purpose is primarily theory extension.

5) Fifth-year teacher preparation programs should result in certification, rather than the master's degree. As some schools of education have abandoned the undergraduate major in education, they have begun awarding a master's degree at the completion of the requirements for teacher certification. In some cases this causes the creation of yet another degree designation, i.e., the M.A.T., with the understanding that after several years of teaching experience, the student may return and receive the more rigorous M.Ed. or M.S. degree, which requires a thesis or written project (Woolfolk, 1989). Not only does this practice cheapen graduate education, it also increases the existing confusion over differences among various graduate degrees.

6) Teacher preparation programs, whether at the bachelor's level or fifth year, should provide graduates with skills and knowledge necessary for them to become leaders in their own schools. Students who currently receive teaching certificates should be better prepared to observe, reflect, and share their insights regarding school improvement with fellow teachers. This does not imply that new courses in the teacher preparation must be added to the curriculum, but that existing courses should be modified to accommodate these topics.

Conclusions

The current debate regarding which graduate degrees should be offered in education should be refocused instead on the competencies we expect of students at each level of graduate study. Too often the arguments have led to the erroneous conclusion that education must choose between the mutually exclusive goals of preparing professionals to staff the nation's schools, or advancing the field through research (Schwebel, 1985). The central point of this paper is that all professional educators, regardless of their particular title or setting, must eventually come to view themselves not only as excellent teachers, but as educational leaders. They should be anxious to improve the teaching and learning going on around them. In order to make such improvements, educators at all levels of preparation must observe, reflect, synthesize, and draw conclusions about the teaching and learning process.

In recent years, schools of education have found themselves in an increasingly uneasy position on campuses of major universities. This clash between university and education faculty has often stemmed from the low value that many education faculty place on research (Wisniewski & Ducharme, 1989). The pressure to supervise student teachers and teach courses has led some education faculty to de-emphasize research. However, some education faculty have embraced the other extreme in which they imitate the research done in the social sciences by conducting studies that have little relevance to the actual processes of teaching and learning (Clifford & Guthrie, 1988). We believe that both of these approaches have proven to be unfruitful. We agree with Wisniewski and Ducharme's (1989) call for professors of education to become accepted in both the university and the public schools:

> We are convinced that the education professoriate must serve both the academy and the schools. We urge a shift from a grudging acceptance of this dual responsibility to a spirited embrace of it. We must transform the world of teaching and learning. In order to do so, we must reside in the twin worlds of the academy and the public schools. Some faculty already do so; many more must. (p. 152)

Once professors of education successfully combine their own roles in teacher preparation and research, it is hoped that the arguments for one type of graduate degree over another will evolve into the more substantive discussion of graduates' competencies. As graduate degrees are currently structured, there will likely be as much variance among the requirements for different Ed.D. programs (i.e., some do not require a dissertation), as between the program requirements for degrees with different names (Ed.D. versus the Ph.D. or M.Ed. versus the M.S.). What is critical is that the field of education come to a greater consensus regarding how the master's degree recipient will differ from those holding bachelor's degrees or from those who are awarded the doctorate. We suggest that all degree recipients in education should learn to combine their teaching role with their role as a seeker of new knowledge. As educators continue to merge these

essential roles, they will, along with the graduates they prepare, provide the leadership needed to improve teaching and learning in the broader society.

Table 1

Sample Activities for Three Degree Levels According to Four Target Goals for Education Graduates

	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral
SEARCH	Read, study, observe, reflect. Use scientific method informally. Skilled in using single subject designs.	Understand meaning of basic empirical methods, basic statistical procedures. Develop exportable instructional materials.	Use an array of empirical methods, both quantitative and qualitative.
APPLY	Teach younger learners and those seeking bachelor's degrees.	Teach those seeking master's degrees.	Teach those seeking doctoral degrees.
SHARE	Share information with parents, other teachers in the school, and with those seeking certification.	Share information at local conferences, district inservice meetings.	Share information at national conferences, with journals, and book publishers.
LEAD	Provide leadership in the school.	Provide leadership in the district.	Provide leadership in the nation.

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Figure Captions

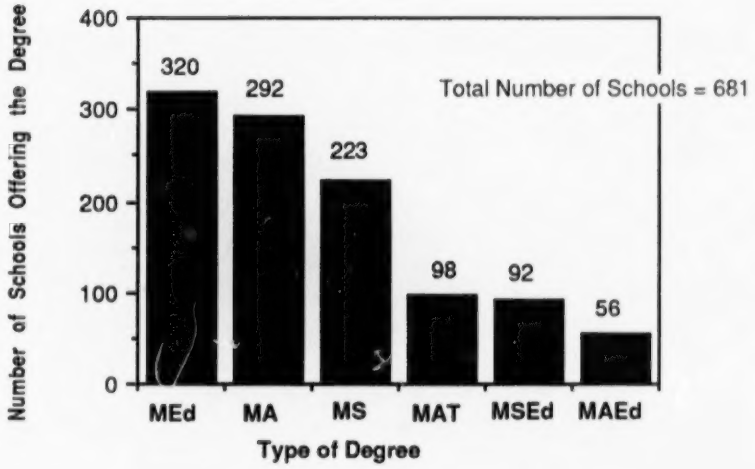
Figure 1. The number of institutions offering each of the six most common types of master's degrees in education.

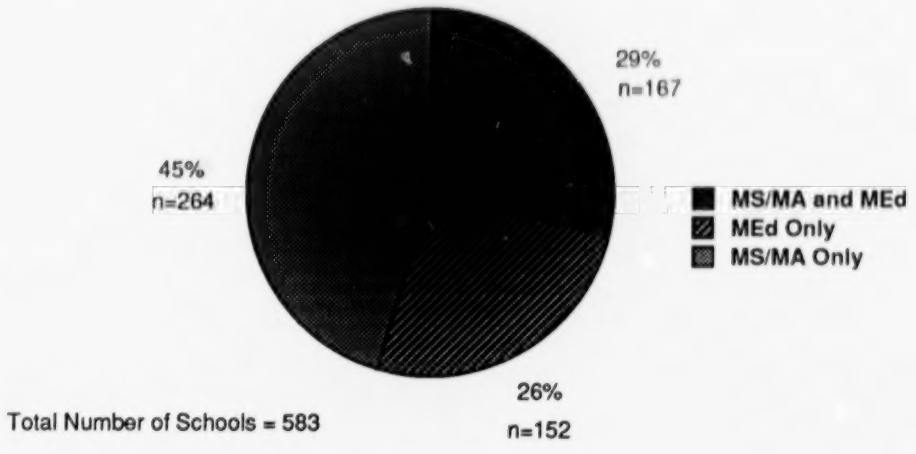
Figure 2. The percent and number of institutions offering the M.Ed. only, the M.S. or M.A. only, or both the M.S. or M.A. and M.Ed. degrees.

Figure 3. The number of institutions offering each type of doctoral degree in education.

Figure 4. The percent and number of institutions offering the Ed.D. only, the Ph.D. only, or both the Ed.D. and Ph.D. degrees.

Figures 1 and 2





Figures 3 and 4